كلية الآداب و العلوم الإنسانية - ظهر المهراز ⵜⴰⵙⴷⴰⵡⵉⵜ ⵏ ⵜⵓⵔⵉⵜⵉⵏ ⴰ ⵜⵉⵙⵓⵙⵉⵏ ⵜⵉⵏⵉⵔⴰⵏⵉⵏ - ⵎⵓⵔⵉ ⵏⵎⵓⵔⴰⵣ Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines - Dhar El Mahraz	جامعة سيدي محمد بن عبد الله بفاس ⵜⴰⵎⴰⵡⴰⵙⵜ ⵙⵉⴷⵉ ⵎⵓⵃⴰⵎⴷ ⴱⵏ ⵄⴰⴱⴷⵍⵍⴰⵀ ⴰ ⵎⵓⵔⵉ UNIVERSITÉ SIDI MOHAMED BEN ABDELLAH DE FES
UNIVERSITY SIDI MOHAMED BEN ABDELLAH (USMBA), FEZ FACULTY OF LETTERS DHAR LMEHRAZ (FLDM) DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE	

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Fieldwork on:

The types of errors that English language learners make in their language learning process and solutions to these errors

The source of the data collected for this fieldwork is the post-secondary students in

The Technical Center of Administration and Management, Vocational Training

Introduction

Language learning is a painful process that involves a range of factors that can influence the ability of learners to acquire the target language. One of the most common issues faced by language learners is the tendency to make errors while communicating in the target language. Errors in language learning refer to deviations from the target language, which can occur at any level, including phonological, lexical, grammatical, and discourse levels. In this essay, we will explore, through our class observation and communication [in the target language] with our students, the types of errors that English language learners make as well as try to delineate the reasons why learners make errors in the target language, focusing on both linguistic and non-linguistic factors.

English language learners (ELLs) often make errors in their use of the target language (English language), particularly when they are first learning the language. Through our class observation and the conversation we had with our students in a Vocational Training Center, we detected various types of errors such as grammatical errors, vocabulary errors, pronunciation errors, idiomatic errors, and cultural errors. Note that we took into consideration the uneven level that students have in the target language. For this reason, we decided to observe and communicate with different classes.

Cultural and idiomatic errors

For the upper-intermediate and advanced levels, we found out that students at these two levels make cultural and idiomatic errors. An example of a cultural error is the use third personal male pronoun to address a cat. For example, they say:

(1) I have a cat. He is white and black

Addressing cats is a culturally controversial issue. As Muslims, we most often use the pronoun *it* to address non-human beings and cats included. This shows that the students stick to the western culture to address cats. In Muslim cultures, addressing cats would be like:

(2) I have a cat. It is white and black

As for the idiomatic errors, students do make enormous errors. In a lesson we gave to students about idioms in the first semester of this academic year, we started introducing the lesson with the famous idiom “break a leg”. After we asked students what does this idiom mean, we received answers related to the action of breaking something which is the leg. Thus, what all the students do is translating the idiom as it appears without recognizing the real meaning of the idiom. It also worth emphasizing that none of the students thought of the word “luck” which is the exact word underlying the idiom above.

Generally, cultural and idiomatic errors are the most, if not the only, types of errors that the students make at these two levels, in addition to some grammar and

pronunciation mistakes that emerge in certain times due to stress, shyness, uncomfort, or tongue slips.

Grammatical error

At the levels lower than the upper-intermediate level, however, we found out that students make different errors, including the two previously stated ones, in addition to the grammatical, vocabulary, and pronunciation errors. For the idiomatic error, just like upper intermediate and advanced levels, students at the lower levels drift behind the literal translation of idioms. Concerning grammatical errors, we often hear students using the VSO (subject-verb-object) sentence order, that is used for the Arabic language. When I asked a student to give me a sentence in the simple past tense during the lesson, she literally said:

(3) Visit I my family

Though the sentence above is grammatically incorrect, it is still conveying something about the speaker. Nonetheless, we, as teachers, try to make it clear to students the sentence order in the Arabic language is different from the one in English, and that the VSO order is not universal to all languages, that is, other languages may not accept this order. Among these, not limited to, English and French. These two languages use the SVO (subject-verb-object) order.

In Arabic language, for instance, we say:

(4) [زار احمد المتحف]

Whereas in the English language, the SVO order is applied. As in the following example;

(5) Mohamed has a car

Similarly, in the French language, we apply the same order as in English.

For example:

(6) [Riad a mangé une pomme]

Another grammatical error that we saw students making a lot is the omission of ‘s’, ‘es’, or ‘ies’ from the end of the verb preceded by the third personal/thing pronouns (he, she, it) in the present simple tense. Note that at these lower levels, very few students give correct sentences in the present simple tense. For a large portion of the students, we heard sentences such as

(7) He go to mosque

(8) She like tennis

Sometimes, however, students apply this rule to the first person both singular and plural. While correcting an exam sheet in the first semester from this academic year, I come across answers like:

(9) I plays football in weekends

(10) We loves swimming

The example (9) contains two errors. The insertion of ‘s’ at the end of the verb ‘play’ which is preceded by the first personal pronoun singular ‘I’, and the use of ‘in’ before weekends instead of ‘on’. Similarly, in example (10), students added ‘s’ to the verb ‘love’ though it is preceded by a plural pronoun. In more general terms, students insert ‘s’ at the end of the verb preceded by the first person pronouns singular and plural believing that the ‘s’ morpheme doesn’t play any role and it is deletable in any case. However, students who inserted the ‘s’ in example (10) argued, when they were asked during the exam correction why did they add ‘s’ to ‘love’, that the subject ‘we’ is plural and the verb should also be plural. Furthermore, these students added the ‘s’ morpheme in the wrong place, but also believe that by adding ‘s’ to the verb makes it plural, which, in turn, is another type of error that sometimes occurs in our classes.

As teachers, we try to explain to students that in the present simple tense, the morpheme ‘s’ is not added randomly and that the role it plays in the verb has nothing to do with the plural form. We also try to familiarize students with the cases in which ‘s’ is added to the verb. More particularly, the ‘s’ letter is inserted only and only if the subject is a third person or thing/pronoun singular, and the ‘s’ never goes with the first person and third person plural.

Vocabulary error

Another error that is common to all levels, but strongly ubiquitous at the lower level students is vocabulary error. The most popular vocabulary error is the use of ‘small’ and ‘big’ to talk about age. During a class observation in our training center, the teacher was delivering a family tree lesson. At a moment, the teacher asked a student to describe her family tree (members). The student told her family tree to the teacher, which includes grandparents, parents, and two sisters including the student. Again, the teacher asked the same student if she is older/younger than her sister. She latterly said:

(11) I am bigger than my sister

For the third time, the teacher asked the student to say the sentence another way. She responded:

(12) my sister is smaller than me

In examples (11) and (12) above, the student made a vocabulary by using words that are used to talk about size believing that these words are also used in age. The teacher, then demonstrated to the whole class that when talking about age, we use old and young.

Pronunciation error

Additionally, pronunciation error is another type of error we always hear in class. Note that pronunciation error is the most repeated error that observe in each class. It is extremely important to mention that pronunciation error takes different forms including, but not limited to, silent sounds like in listen, hour, and honest …etc., and

the whole word form mispronunciation such as development, future, dialogue …etc. In the first case, students pronounce such words exactly as they appear. In a warm-up stage early this semester, I asked students what activities they do before coming to class. A student said

(13) I listen to music

With the ‘t’ sound pronounced in the word ‘listen’.

Another student stated

(14) to be honest, I don’t do activities before I come to class

With the ‘h’ sound pronounced in ‘honest’.

In the second case, however, students mingle French with English to pronounce those and other words. For example, the word ‘development’ is pronounced exactly as in French.

As teachers, we make it clear to students that languages are different when it comes to pronunciation at all levels of sounds, words, and sentences. That is pronouncing development in French is completely different from pronouncing it in English. Hence, they should listen carefully to these in the target language, and that correct pronunciation needs careful listening.

Conclusion

It is natural for English Language Learners (ELLs) to make errors while learning the language. They should be reminded that mistakes are a normal part of the learning process and should not be discouraged. Instead, they should be encouraged to keep practicing and improving their English skills. Consistent practice, along with guidance and feedback, can help them identify and correct their mistakes. It is important for ELLs to feel comfortable and confident in using the language, and to understand that making mistakes is a crucial step towards fluency. Teachers and peers should create a supportive and inclusive learning environment that promotes language development without fear of making errors. With persistence and support, ELLs can overcome language barriers and achieve proficiency in English.